

★ Roll Call Number

Agenda Item Number

43

January 14, 2019

Date

Request from Alex Hoopes, to speak regarding predatory towing.

Moved by \_\_\_\_\_ to

COUNCIL ACTION	YEAS	NAYS	PASS	ABSENT
COWNIE				
BOESEN				
COLEMAN				
GATTO				
GRAY				
MANDELBAUM				
WESTERGAARD				
TOTAL				
MOTION CARRIED			APPROVED	
_____ Mayor				

**CERTIFICATE**

I, DIANE RAUH, City Clerk of said City hereby certify that at a meeting of the City Council of said City of Des Moines, held on the above date, among other proceedings the above was adopted.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal the day and year first above written.

\_\_\_\_\_  
City Clerk

**Rauh, Diane I.**

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**From:** Mandelbaum, Josh T. <JoshMandelbaum@dmgov.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, December 14, 2018 2:42 AM  
**To:** Hoopes, Alex  
**Subject:** RE: Raising an Issue

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

[REDACTED]

I got to the end of your email and appreciate the request. I think the appropriate next step would be for you to request to speak at a Council meeting about this. You'll have 3-5 minutes. If you come to speak on this topic, I will make a motion to ask the city attorney to look into an ordinance that requires notice of towing. You can contact the city clerk at [CityClerk@dmgov.org](mailto:CityClerk@dmgov.org). Thanks.

Josh

Josh Mandelbaum  
Des Moines City Council Member  
Phone: 515-240-7750 (cell)  
[joshmandelbaum@dmgov.org](mailto:joshmandelbaum@dmgov.org)



**From:** Hoopes, Alex [<mailto:ahoopes@outcomesmtm.com>]  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 13, 2018 3:24 PM  
**To:** Mandelbaum, Josh T. <JoshMandelbaum@dmgov.org>  
**Subject:** Raising an Issue

Hello Josh,

My name is Alex Hoopes and I'm a resident of Sherman Hill. This is my first time ever reaching out to a councilman for any kind of assistance and I'm hopeful it's a fruitful experience!

I was recently the victim of what I believed to be a predatory towing company: Crow Tow. The other night, I had parked in a commercial parking lot across the street from a pizza place where I was hosting a session of bar trivia. As I pulled into the parking lot, I took care to try to identify any "no parking" or "private property" signs...and I did not see any. When I came back to the parking lot at around 9:15pm, my car was gone and a tow truck from Crow Tow was in the parking lot hooking up another car. The woman who owned the car was pleading with the tow truck driver to let her driver her car away and he agreed to drop it off the bed if she paid him \$100 in cash. I asked the tow truck driver why he was towing cars in this lot when there isn't any posted signs saying that cars should not park in this lot. He gestured to a sign that was affixed to the wall and said "there's the sign" (see picture attached).

I went to the Crow Tow lot this morning and, after paying the \$130 fine, was able to retrieve my car. I am fortunate to be gainfully employed and could pull together the funds to pay for my car. I could tell that the other people in the office this morning were probably not in the same position as I was and, based on the conversations I could hear, they seemed to have fallen victim to similar predatory towing practices.

I am calling this "predatory towing" because, as you can see in the attached picture, there was very little effort to inform the general public that your car could get towed by parking in this commercial parking lot. This tiny sign pushed all the way into the corner doesn't even say the words "no parking" or "tow away zone". I spent part of my morning pouring over the city's municipal code and was disappointed to see that there are no requirements for businesses to post signs if they intend to tow away cars. Many other municipalities have these requirements; here's a few examples I found through a quick google search:

[http://arlingtontx.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view\\_id=2&clip\\_id=1611&meta\\_id=189382](http://arlingtontx.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=2&clip_id=1611&meta_id=189382)

[http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App\\_mode=Display\\_Statute&URL=0700-0799/0715/Sections/0715.07.html](http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL=0700-0799/0715/Sections/0715.07.html)

<https://dallascityhall.com/departments/aviation/DCH%20Document/Chapter%2048A.pdf>

It's clear to me that Crow Tow's intent is to entrap motorists into parking their cars in an area that appears to be safe so they can spring up, snatch your car, and hold it for ransom. As the owner of my vehicle, I had no recourse other than to pay the bill in order to get my car back and go to work. If the city of Des Moines had the appetite to amend its ordinances to require businesses to clearly post signs indicating "tow zones", I think it would accomplish two goals: 1) motorists would be less likely to park in an area that a property owner doesn't want them to park in, and 2) impede the ability for predatory towing companies to seize private property and hold it for ransom.

If you made it all the way to the end of this email, I appreciate your attention and interest in this issue. I'm a millennial with a libertarian bent so reaching out to one of my governmental representatives so I'm interested to see where this goes!

Take care,  
Alex Hoopes



**Alex Hoopes, PharmD, CAHIMS**

Director, Network Performance

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